

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR'S OP-ED WARNING PALESTINIANS TO CONTROL TERRORISM

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 22, 2005

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to a particularly important and insightful op-ed written by Israeli Ambassador Daniel Ayalon in yesterday's Washington Post. Ambassador Ayalon gives a forthright analysis of the precarious position that Israel finds itself in as it prepares courageously to implement Gaza disengagement.

Israel's bold decision to hand Gaza over to the Palestinians—risking its national unity for the sake of advancing prospects for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—clearly demonstrates its profound devotion to peace-making. Nevertheless, Palestinian terrorism is on the rise again. Islamic extremists from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, in particular, continue to attack Israeli civilians with Qassam rockets, mortars, suicide bombings, and drive-by shootings. The reason is clear. The terrorists want people to believe that Israel is withdrawing out of fear, not generosity or commitment to peace.

Ambassador Ayalon rightly warns Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that he must bring the terrorism to a halt; otherwise, he will waste the Palestinians' best opportunity ever to demonstrate that they are "capable of governing a functioning democratic society, free from terrorism and focused on improving the lives of its citizens." Mr. Speaker, I want to underscore my complete agreement with this judgment. Ambassador Ayalon is exactly right in saying that "Gaza is both the opportunity and the test for the Palestinian leadership."

With much of Israeli society in anguish over the disengagement, no one can dispute that the Israeli government is doing more than its part for the sake of peace. Now it is time for the Palestinian government to respond in kind; if it equivocates, the terrorists will win.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the entire text of the Ambassador's soberingly perceptive op-ed be placed in the RECORD.

IN GAZA, A TEST CASE FOR PEACE

(By Ambassador Daniel Ayalon)

Next month thousands of Israelis will be uprooted from their homes in 25 settlements, against the backdrop of widespread political opposition and intensifying Palestinian terrorism. Israel faces difficult days ahead.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is boldly determined to move forward with disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank out of a deep conviction that it is critical to Israel's future. Unfortunately, the Palestinian leadership has failed to meet him halfway. The Palestinian Authority's refusal to disarm terrorist organizations has enabled the terrorists to regroup and renew deadly attacks against Israelis, compounding the difficulties of this engagement and casting

an ominous shadow on the possibility of future progress.

The sharp increase in Palestinian terrorist attacks, particularly in the past week, underscores the precariousness of the situation. While Israel is committed to completing the disengagement as planned, we will not sit idly by while our civilians are under attack. Time is running out for the Palestinian leadership to confront the terrorists. Should it fail to do so, Israel will be forced to take the necessary steps to defend its people. Lest the Palestinians miss another historic opportunity, the world should insist that they crack down on terrorism now.

After numerous failed attempts by Israelis and Palestinians to reach peaceful accommodation over the past 15 years, Sharon decided to embark on a different course. Disengagement is an immense political, strategic and indeed historical undertaking, aimed at reducing friction between Israelis and Palestinians, jump-starting the peace process and providing the Palestinians with a unique opportunity to build institutions of responsible self-governance.

At the same time, it puts a terrible burden on thousands of Israelis called on to leave their homes against their will. Many have lived there for more than three generations. Specially trained, unarmed units will move from house to house as part of a massive logistical operation involving some 50,000 security personnel, accompanied by teams of social workers and psychologists. Living, breathing communities, some more than 30 years old, will simply vanish. Businesses, factories and farms will be shut down. Schools, synagogues and cemeteries will be relocated. The removal of graves, including those of terrorism victims, will be especially heart-wrenching.

The trauma of disengagement has unleashed dangerous rifts in Israeli society. While the withdrawal is supported by most of the public, many Israelis deeply oppose it on moral, religious and security grounds. Sharon has demonstrated steadfast leadership in the face of an unprecedented political backlash from his traditional supporters. Given the intense political opposition and growing civil disobedience, the prospect of violent resistance cannot be ruled out. Regardless of the outcome, the repercussions of disengagement will be felt in Israel for years. At stake is not only the success of disengagement but also the very fabric of Israeli society.

Adding fuel to the fire, public anxiety in Israel has increased because of the resurgence of Palestinian terrorism, including suicide bombings, drive-by shootings and rocket attacks. Rather than confront the terrorist organizations and disarm them, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has invited Hamas into his government, thereby providing a terrorist organization with an official seal of approval. The result has been an emboldened Hamas, a further weakening of the Palestinian Authority and a potentially disastrous perception that disengagement is a victory for terrorism rather than an opportunity for peace.

Abbas must seize the moment and lead the Palestinians toward peace. The terrorist organizations must be disarmed as called for in the "road map" if Palestinian statehood is to be achieved. This is non-negotiable. Gaza is both the opportunity and the test for the

Palestinian leadership. Will that leadership prove itself capable of governing a functioning democratic society, free from terrorism and focused on improving the lives of its citizens, or will it squander yet another opportunity? After leaving Gaza, Israel will no longer provide an easy excuse for Palestinian failure.

The rock-solid, principled and bipartisan support for Israel in the United States has been vital to our ability to overcome terrorism and prepare the ground for a political initiative. The notion of disengagement would have been unthinkable had Israel not prevailed in the latest round of sustained terrorism waged by the Palestinians since September 2000.

The stakes for Israel are enormous. We are a strong but small country facing a largely hostile region roughly 500 times our size. We can ill afford to make mistakes. Iran's nuclear weapons program is imminent, posing an existential threat. Syria and Iran promote and support Palestinian terrorist groups sworn to our destruction. Hezbollah has intensified terrorist attacks against Israel from Lebanon, opening a second front aimed at derailing any progress. Despite these challenges, Israel has shown it is prepared to take difficult steps to achieve President Bush's vision for peace in the Middle East. The world should insist on no less from the Palestinians.

THE AFRICAN GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY ACT FORUM

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 22, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of my colleagues and this country an important announcement by the Bush Administration. This week, the Administration took two important steps in developing a strong trade and investment partnership between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa.

On Monday, President Bush announced the African Global Competitiveness Initiative, which continue and increase funding for trade capacity building efforts currently funded under the Trade for African Development and Enterprise Program. Under these new changes, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Regional Trade Hubs would be expanded from three to four in order to create greater opportunities and mechanisms for trading in Africa. The Hubs are currently located in Accra, Ghana; Gaborone, Botswana; Nairobi, Kenya. These hubs are important in identifying, promoting, and developing trading alliances that benefit the people of Africa and the U.S.

On Wednesday, during her visit to Dakar, Senegal, the Honorable Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced the creation of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Diversification Fund. The fund will provide resources to help African countries diversify their economies, including the development of transportation systems in African

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